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NEWS RELEASE

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STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES SHARE IN THE LARGEST DRUG-RELATED CASH SEIZURE IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

FRESNO – At a ceremony to be held today at 2:30 p.m. at the United States Courthouse, United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott and Drug Enforcement Administration, Special Agent in Charge Javier F. Pena announce the presentation of seven checks to state and local agencies representing portions of the largest drug-related cash seizure ever to occur in the Central Valley.

The cash seizure occurred as a result of a long-term Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), California Department of Justice, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), with the assistance of numerous state and local law enforcement agencies, including the Madera County Narcotics Enforcement Team (MADNET), the Merced Police Department, the Merced County Sheriff's Department, the Fresno County Sheriff's Department, the Los Banos Police Department and the Merced Multi-Agency Narcotics Task Force. The case resulted in the seizure of over \$1.4 million in cash used to facilitate the drug conspiracy and approximately 38 kilograms, or approximately 84 pounds, of high-purity cocaine from the SERGIO PADILLA drug organization.

The cash seizure is the largest ever made in the Eastern District of California, the federal judicial district which encompasses 34 counties reaching from the Oregon border in the north to Bakersfield in the south, from the coastal mountains in the west to the Nevada border in the east. The estimated street value of 38 kilograms of cocaine is between \$4 million and \$8 million dollars. In addition, forfeiture proceedings have been instituted against three homes owned by SERGIO PADILLA, his wife, MONICA PADILLA, and his sister, LORENA PEREZ, which were used to facilitate drug trafficking offenses or were purchased with drug proceeds.

Today's monetary disbursement to the state and local agencies represents proceeds of the cash seizure. The checks, ranging from \$32,670.06 to \$422,917.22, are a result of the Department of Justice's equitable sharing program that allows monies seized through the collaborative efforts of state, local and federal agencies to be shared with state and local law enforcement. The monies are used by the agencies to continue to combat drug activity in the Central Valley by providing additional resources for vehicles, salaries and other law enforcement tools.

According to court documents, SERGIO PADILLA and PHILIP and WAYNE BRIZAN headed a nationwide drug distribution conspiracy. For at least six years, PADILLA, a previously

convicted drug felon and cocaine wholesaler, directed the shipment and distribution of large quantities of cocaine throughout the United States. Brothers WAYNE, PHILIP, and JUDE BRIZAN, who are originally from Grenada, were responsible for coordinating and transporting large amounts of cocaine obtained from PADILLA to the East Coast, primarily the Philadelphia area where the cocaine was distributed to violent gang members. The brothers shipped the cocaine in semi-tractor trailers containing partially legitimate loads of agricultural produce.

"This wide ranging investigation exemplifies federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies sharing resources and working together to combat high-level drug trafficking and crime in the Central Valley and throughout the United States," said United States Attorney Scott. Scott added, "Removing the profit motive by seizing the proceeds of illegal drug trafficking activity is one of the best ways to discourage drug traffickers from building a power base within our communities."

"Asset seizure cripples drug trafficking organizations and channels these poisonous proceeds into something positive through asset sharing with our partners in law enforcement. The DEA looks forward in continuing the strong partnerships we have developed with law enforcement in California's Central Valley," stated DEA Special Agent in Charge Peña.

"We are very pleased to receive these funds. This distribution culminates a great joint investigative effort, an effort that has resulted in the disruption and dismantling of a major drug trafficking organization. In addition to serving as punishment to the defendants, these funds will assist our future investigative efforts into other criminal organizations. We hope that this action serves as a strong deterrent to others who might consider entering the drug trafficking business," stated Rick Oules, Director, Law Enforcement for the California Attorney General's Department of Justice, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement.

"The combined effort of federal, state and local agencies continues to represent best practices while attacking large scale drug organizations. The Sergio Padilla case is a prime example of the cooperative effort that Central Valley law enforcement continues to foster and promote. The Fresno County Sheriffs Department also thanks the United States Attorney's Office for their continued support through federal prosecution and asset sharing. These funds are critical in helping the Fresno Sheriff's Department fulfill its mission of providing excellent public safety services," said Assistant Sheriff Jeff Hollis.

To date, twelve co-conspirators have been indicted in the case, including SERGIO REYNOL PADILLA, aka Sergio Reynol Padilla-Gonzalez, 39, MONICA PADILLA, 29, LORENA PEREZ, 38, GERARDO VARGAS GALICIA, 37, GILBERT FRANKLIN, 32, all of Merced, TRINIDAD ANGULO, 40, of Madera, WAYNE BRIZAN, aka Cornelius James, aka Mark Brizan, aka Anthony Wilkins, 37, of Davie, Florida, PHILIP BRIZAN, 41, FRANCHESKA BRIZAN, 37, both of Atwater, JUDE BRIZAN, 42, of Modesto, DAMON GUNN, 31, of Turlock, and HOWARD GORDON, JR., 31, of Los Angeles, California. The defendants have been charged by a federal grand jury with various drug, money laundering, structuring, and false currency transaction report offenses. The charges in the indictment are only allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

SERGIO PADILLA, the BRIZAN brothers, GILBERT FRANKLIN, TRINIDAD ANGULO, and GERARDO GALICIA have been detained as flight risks and dangers to the community. MONICA PADILLA, FRANCHESKA BRIZAN, DAMON GUNN, and HOWARD

GORDON have been released on bonds. LORENA PEREZ was originally detained as a danger to the community but was later released on a property bond. The next district court appearance in this matter is scheduled before United States District Judge Anthony W. Ishii in Fresno on Monday, December 11, 2006.

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